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A father buries his child.

Death and dying in Africa

by Amos Kasibante



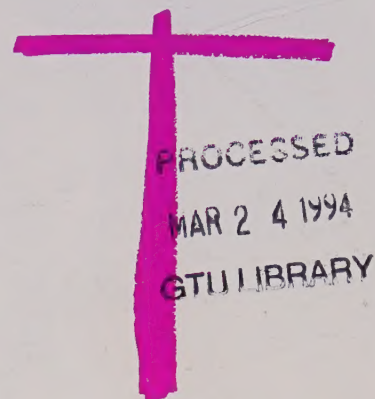
The peoples of Africa have several identities as, indeed, do peoples from other continents; and one identifies more closely with one's kith and kin than with the modern African entities called states.

Yet it is surprising to see the many similarities there among many African peoples; similarities that cut across differences of geography, language and ethnicity. Nowhere are the similarities more evident than at key moments in a person's life: at birth, marriage and death. I am a Muganda from Uganda in East Africa. The Ganda word for a wedding is 'mbaga' and 'embaga'. The word can also mean ceremony. The Baganda say that a person has three mbagas in life - birth, marriage and death.

This division of life into three high points

is significant for the understanding of death, not only among the Baganda, but among the African peoples as a whole. To appreciate the African view of death, one must understand the African view of life. For the African death is not the cessation of life but its fulfillment and the occasion when a person enters into the final or permanent state of being.

Death is not annihilation but the point of entry into another world, a very real world. Not only birth or marriage is celebrated but also death. There is a paradox in death; it is the moment of mourning but also of



BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS

In this issue we offer readers articles from an African priest, an Anglican religious sister, a medical practitioner, and a hospice chaplain, on the theme of death and bereavement. In a culture whose entire energy is directed towards the creation and enjoyment of wealth, death is unmentionable - and therefore often takes us unawares, unprepared, and defenceless. In the face of death, let the Gospel be heard.

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Christian Aid/M. Goldwater

celebration. Among many African peoples there is at death both mourning and wailing and singing and dancing.

We have said that in Africa birth, marriage and death are all of a piece. In Africa very few marriages will be stable without the birth of a child. Even Christian marriages are under great strain where there is no child. This is not just because the woman is valued primarily in her productive capacity; and although in the past infertility was blamed on the woman, these days the situation is changing and people know that it could be due to the man.

It is wrong to say that Africans do not know of the idea or experience of romantic love, as many people in the west seem to think. But perhaps it is not untrue to say that in Africa it is not so much the idea of romance that drives people into marriage as the moral obligation imposed by society.

Gift of life

When you grow up, you must get married, and you marry with a view to setting up home and bringing up children. The children that you bring into the world are not 'your' children; they are born into a clan - that unit of close social, psychological and blood ties. Life is enhanced each time a child is born. Life is a gift. It is also sharing - a shared experience and something that must be passed on. By producing and bringing up a child one is contributing to the being of his community. That is why the birth of a child is celebrated not only by the nuclear family but by relatives, friends

and members of the village.

Related to the idea of the increase of life in child-bearing is the belief in a form of 'reincarnation' of the dead person in the life of another person, a child. The understanding here is more symbolic than literal. The word used in Luganda is 'kubbuka' or 'okubbuka'. It can be interpreted variously as to raise, to resist going under or sinking, or to go under and re-appear at a different point.

The dead live on

Used of a child the word may refer to the traits of a dead person showing in the child. It is also usual to give the name of a dead person (not always a relative) to a child as a way of acknowledging the 'being' or 'being there' of a deceased person. This kind of naming is called 'kubbula' or 'okubbula' meaning to raise or live. The simple interpretation here is that the dead live on in the living, and this is made possible through child-bearing.

The death of a child is a moment of much sadness and questioning. This is because it is felt that the child is not given the opportunity to live a full life and reach the stage of fulfillment. Thus, the death of a child is regarded as a tragedy whereas that of an old person is not. Africans regard a good death as one that occurs when a person has married, produced children and seen his or her grandchildren. Such a person 'goes' (that is, dies) in peace.

When a child dies it is not given an heir. This cannot be because he or she has no

property. The reason seems to be that the young person will not have acquired special responsibilities that need inheriting. Neither will he or she have developed a persistent character and personality worth attaining and passing on. In Africa inheritance is not just a proprietary issue. More so is it a blood issue.

We have seen that the birth of a child brings joy not only to the couple and their close friends and relations but to a wider group. Even on the streets of a modern city like Accra, Nairobi or Dar es Salaam total strangers will greet a newly delivered mother as if she were from battle. Marriage and death also evoke a lot of communal sentiment and both events are attended by huge crowds of people from the village where the couple were born, by former schoolmates and well-wishers.

Signs of mourning

When a person dies in the village or when someone dies in a town and the body is taken to the rural area (which is what usually happens) the people in the village stop all work on the fields as a sign of mourning and as an expression of solidarity with the family of the deceased.

Stopping work is also based on the belief that when a person dies, the flow of life is temporarily halted. It is not just the individual who dies, but also the community which dies symbolically with him or her. People leave their homes and gather at the homestead of the deceased. They stay there until the funeral has taken

place. In many Christian homes today the people will sing hymns all night.

Africans still bury their dead. There is no cremation and no undertaker. Burial is a very important event and all the people who knew the deceased want to be present at the burial. Death is regarded as a journey, a long journey and the gathering at the funeral is seen as a kind of farewell. In Luganda it is called 'okuwerekera'. The word has the sense of keeping someone company, of not letting the person go alone.

The great leveller

The dead person is seen paradoxically as beyond suffering and yet as vulnerable. Death is known the world over to cause a high degree of bereavement and loneliness. In Africa this loneliness is absorbed by the community which does not leave the individual to grieve alone.

Burial in Africa is not just a method of disposal but an expression of the people's attitude to life and death. Thus, although there may be experienced and able bodied men who can do the burying, others are also encouraged to participate. Even children and babies may be made to drop some soil inside the grave. To bury someone is to cover them. It is also an indication that even in death a person retains dignity. Death is also seen as the great leveller; for everyone will die whatever their status.

Because of burial the concept of 'soil' has many associations with the African interpretation of death. The Baganda have a saying, 'Sekiriba kya ttaka, mpaawo atalikyambale', meaning 'Soil is the ugly coat which everyone will be forced to wear'. It does not only refer to human mortality as does the Greek 'seauton gnothi' (know that you are mortal) but to the need to show sympathy and contribute when others have lost a loved one.

'Eaten' by soil

The Baganda have composed songs which refer to soil as the great swallower, but also as the object of the people's communal act of vengeance. I will quote the words of one such song which was sung in my home village when I was young. It was sung with much rejoicing and drumming and dancing:

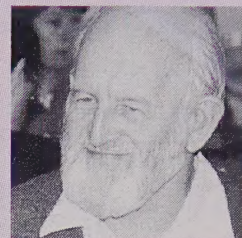
'Ettaka lino lindiko ensonga'
(I have a case against the soil)
Response: 'Kyenya ndirinnya'
(That is why I trample it).

The leader then goes on to mention various people who were 'eaten' by soil. The idea behind the song is that death does not have the final word, and that life is a struggle between life and death. As a community we gather in order to garner our spiritual resources in combat against death. Yet death is accepted as the return of life to God, its ultimate source.

The Reverend Amos Kasibante is a Tutor at the College of the Ascension, Selly Oak.

Minister's Letter

Brother Brian, Minister General of the First Order Brothers, writes:



Writing this on the Feast of St Francis, October 4th, I join with thousands of Franciscans and many other church people across the world to thank God for this most amazing saint. Francis inspires us because of his intense love and also imitation of the Lord Jesus. One is always discovering more of Francis and what it means to be Franciscan.

Just as we keep close to Jesus by frequent reflection on the gospels in the liturgy and in personal reading so we are also made aware of what it means to be Franciscan by regular use of the writings, sayings, prayers and accounts of the life of St Francis. Indeed Francis is himself a commentary on the Gospel of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He points us to Jesus, and by the power of the Holy Spirit enables us by his example and inspiration to live the Gospel in our day.

Great was his love for the three persons of the Holy and Undivided Trinity. Great was his love for the created universe and for all humanity. He has been described as one of the most human saints. Even Lenin when he was dying said "in order to save our country, Russia, we should have had ten men like Francis of Assisi. With ten such men we would have saved Russia."

Yet Francis was not alone. He needed others to live the Gospel life with him. One of these was St Clare. We would say today that they were "soul friends". They inspired each other along the way as each sought to live lives of prayer and poverty for the Kingdom's sake. By their friendship and common vocation they were totally committed to the Lord.

The church has begun a year of commemoration of the 800th anniversary of the birth of Clare. A true Franciscan cannot ignore St Clare. If Franciscans discover more of Francis they must also discover more of Clare. She too will help us to be Franciscans today - she too will help us to live the holy Gospel.

Contemplation, communication and compassion are three words which describe the ministry of Jesus - three words which find their fullest meaning in the cross of Christ. He contemplated the will of the Father; He communicated the

Word of God by His presence and by preaching and teaching. He showed the Divine Compassion through humble sacrificial service and by healing broken people in body, mind and spirit.

Those same three words describe also the ministry of Clare and Francis. Their life was one of the contemplation of Christ; they communicated the Word of God appropriate to their time; and they expressed the compassion of Christ to all sorts and kinds of broken people. Francis was involved in an itinerant ministry of preaching and in a ministry of care for the marginalised people of society. But he was frequently returning to the centres of prayer. From his prayer came his active work, so that his whole life was one of the contemplation of Christ and His cross.

Yesterday I was at a Harvest Thanksgiving Eucharist in a down-town parish church where the congregation live in noisy houses in noisy streets and work in noisy places. I was struck not only by the Word of God being communicated to the worshippers through spoken words and visual aids, not only by a concern for the homeless and single parents who would later be the recipients of the food decorating the church, but particularly by the moments of silence which punctuated the liturgy especially at the beginning after the introit hymn. We were made to feel that "the Lord is here - His Spirit is with us" and we were about to do something really important. I felt that this parish community had got it right in their liturgy and in their parish life. They contemplated Christ through prayer, communicated the Word of God in ways appropriate to the present day, and offered compassionate service in the Name of Christ to those in particular need.

This is the vocation of all disciples of Christ and all Christian communities. Franciscans should be among those who can humbly show the way. May we with Saints Francis and Clare be given grace to do it with courage, conviction and confidence.

Brian SSF

Some suggested further reading on bereavement and loss

Bereavement: a shared experience, by Helen Alexander. Lion, £5.99
Living through grief, by Harold Bauman. OM (Lion), £1.35
Final gifts, by Maggie Callanan and Patricia Kelley. Hodder and Stoughton, £9.99
The facts of death, by Michael Farrell. Hale, £7.95
Letting go, by Ian Ainsworth-Smith and Peter Speck. SPCK, £7.99

Community grief observed

Anonymous

An Anglican sister reflects on change and loss in her community's life and mission



A Sunday School teacher said to her class, 'Hands up all those who want to go to heaven'. Everyone put their hands up except Johnny. 'Johnny, don't you want to go to heaven?' 'Yes Miss, but not with this lot'.

The ambivalence of our feelings towards each other in community is frequently exacerbated by the experience of grief.

Grief arises as a result of separation and loss. The death of someone we love is perhaps the incident which springs to mind when we think of grief. However, the loss of a job, moving house, friends moving away, divorce, separation and quarrels are often no less traumatic. Changes in life style, social values and conditions, practices and customs of institutions are also occasions of grief; the proposed ordination of women to the priesthood being the cause of deep grief and trauma for some.

Security is a basic human need and there is within all of us deep resistance to change. The stronger our personal sense of security the greater our ability to cope with change. Bereavement can often trigger our sense of insecurity and expose unresolved hurts and wounds. The experience of deep loss can be both a time of growth and also a time of deep trauma and even disintegration of the personality. It is a time when we are at our most vulnerable and in need of support from others.

One might imagine that living in community is therefore the easiest and safest place to be for the successful management and resolution of grief. Does not the religious life give us all the help and support we need at this important time? My own experience of bereavement in community leads me to say both yes and no to that question, and also to say, don't take anything for granted.

An ageing community

My community has experienced a great deal of bereavement over the past few years. We are an ageing community and therefore we have seen the deaths of a considerable number of sisters. Vocations appear to have stopped and no one has come to stay for over 20 years. Therefore each year we have a number of funerals but no professions. I have heard no one voice this fact but I believe that it is having a profound effect upon us.

A funeral is a celebration and thanksgiving for a faithful, devoted life but it is also an occasion of deep loss and sorrow. The community is never quite the same again with that gap. A profession is a celebration of joy and welcome and new life, an expectant waiting for the particular gifts the new sister will bring to the life of the community. It also reminds us of our own profession and renews our sense of vocation. All funerals and no professions can quietly and insidiously sap the energy

of the community, particularly if it is unacknowledged.

The major experience of loss for the community has been our withdrawal from Africa. We were founded in Africa for a life of prayer and missionary work and until recently our Mother House had always been there. As vocations ceased and the average age of the community rose we found we could not continue the work we had been doing. National independence and institutional changes meant that working conditions changed considerably and it became obvious that the days of our physical presence in Africa were coming to an end. The decision to leave was taken prayerfully over a period of several years by a consensus of the sisters but it was no less

saying that God wasn't 'he' after all. Some were relating to God as Mother. Some were saying we didn't need the parent figure any more - we had come of age. Some even dared to imply that God was not just God of the Christians.

Already some sisters were involved in interfaith dialogue, making no attempt to convert Muslims and Hindus. They said that we must learn to listen to each other, learn from each other, work together. Where was our missionary vocation? What have we been doing all this time? Where is God? Who or What is God?

Identity crisis

All this amounts to a very profound identity crisis both personally and as a community. Acute loss and even disorientation was experienced by some. We all had different experiences and different ways of responding to them. We came back to Britain at different times over a period of several years, so we were at different stages of the bereavement process.

Some of our younger sisters came back and fairly quickly got into new situations, had some training and seemed to settle



The cemetery at Hilfield.

painful when the time came to leave.

All the major incidents of bereavement were present in that simple fact 'leaving Africa'. It meant the loss of a job, moving house, leaving friends and familiar surroundings, a change in life style and perhaps most bewildering of all, coming back to a Britain we did not know. Traffic had increased beyond all belief particularly when one was used to rural Africa. Ways of thinking, language, customs and attitudes, particularly towards authority, were very different. It was the age of questioning, everything was in flux, nothing seemed stable.

'All a chance to discover where one's true securities lie', you might say. For some sisters that was the most painful part of it all. Where was God in all this? Who was he? In current religious debate some were

easily into a new life style so that when others followed several years later there was sometimes a feeling that some sisters had abandoned Africa and didn't really care.

Perhaps the full shock of bereavement did not hit us until the process of withdrawal was completed. As we passed through the stages of the grief process we experienced shock, numbness and bewilderment increased by the coldness of the climate and change in life style.

The routine of the convent life was fairly familiar although there were differences from the Africa pattern. Some sisters were struggling with the new Office Book although most had come to appreciate it. However ASB Rite A had been introduced and, horror of horror for some, the exchange of the Peace.

There was a move afoot in the community

to be a bit more relaxed, open to each other. This meant less formal recreation and even talking meals. Nothing seemed the same, one was frozen within and without.

After the shock and numbness, or interwoven with it, came the feelings of anger and guilt. Why did we have to leave? Have we not betrayed Africa? Have we failed in our vocation? If we had been more faithful would we have continued to get vocations? Did we fail to adjust to the changes in Africa and so become redundant and unwanted? Yet there are still major needs there; not all of our places have been filled. Have we not let the Africans down? Anger with 'the community' (the religious life equivalent of 'them') each other and ourselves swirled around in varying degrees, some acknowledged, but most hidden and surfacing in the petty irritations of community life.

What is the future?

Acute alarm was experienced by some, a crisis of identity. 'I had given my life for Africa and expected to die there'. What is the future for the community? Is our work finished? Where do I come in all this? Am I finished?

Here I am forced to say that the expectations of the Religious Life can compound this experience of bereavement. We have been trained to be indifferent to our feelings, detached from the changes and chances of this life. We don't show our feelings if we are good religious. I think this is an offshoot from our English middle class way of life and certainly compounds

our neuroses and hangups; there is a great deal of misunderstanding about the teaching on indifference which stunts our humanity.

Acknowledging our pain

I have been very much helped by Buddhist training in meditation and the aim of 'unconditional willingness to be with what is'. For me that means acknowledging our feelings, allowing ourselves to feel them, since trying to suppress them is a refusal to be with what is. What we own in ourselves is less likely to throw us off course. If we acknowledge our pain and anger to ourselves and perhaps to a confidant, they are less likely to be displaced in behaviour which is destructive of community life.

It is a common experience that we find it hardest to share our deep feelings within the community, or with our families. There is an implicit expectation that we should be able to cope; 'they expect us to cope'. 'Showing feelings of grief is a failure of faith, good religious don't do that'.

How I long that we forget the 'good religious' bit and concentrate on being human. We all have our ways of coping with the bereavement, we are all at different stages in the process. If we can be more honest about our own feelings we will be more sensitive and compassionate towards others. It is what is unacknowledged that is so destructive.

Some of us would have liked some group therapy, others were strongly against that. We do have to be sensitive to each other's wishes and needs. There is no one right

way of coping with grief. We have to allow each other the space to work through our own process.

As in all major bereavement, the pain does not go away, rather we learn to live with it and make it part of our prayer. We are still called to a commitment for the Africa most of us will never see again. This is a profound call to a selfless love. Grief is often a time for shattering our illusions, a time to accept things as they are and accept ourselves, to let the loss change us. It is a real Good Friday experience and Easter does not follow at once. I think we often forget Holy Saturday - the tomb experience - the waiting.

Waiting

We have lost so much and most painful of all, we have lost our sense of identity. In our call to share the Passion of Christ I believe we are now called to share the tomb experience of waiting - waiting for our new identity, our identity as human beings and as a community. In exploring the depths of our humanity we are exploring the depths of God. In our tomb experience we wait for the resurrection - our new identity as a gift from God.

'For the darkness of waiting
Of not knowing what is to come
Of staying ready and quiet and attentive,
We praise you O God.
For the darkness and the light are both
alike to you.'

(Janet Morley — *All Desires Known*)

Brother Timothy SSF

Timothy's death at the Royal Foundation of St Katharine, Stepney, on 9th September at the age of 38 has been a great shock and loss to all who knew him.

Tim was born in Plymouth. In 1974 he went to Greystoke Pre-Theological College, Cumbria, where he met his life long friend John Thornton who was with him at his death. In 1977 he moved to London, working for the Ministry of Defence.

He never lost his sense of vocation, to be a religious, but also to be a priest. It was the inspiration of Francis that led him to join the Society in 1982. In autumn 1987 he went to Durham to read Theology and while there made his life profession in 1988 at Alnmouth Friary, where he had lived since 1984. Ordained priest in 1991 in Edinburgh he served in local parishes and with the Ecumenical AIDS Support Team. His great contribution to the life of the Friary was that of homemaker. His life was one of prayer, he was always at Mass and Offices, but this went hand in hand with caring for the many people he met. He always had time for everyone, no matter who they were.

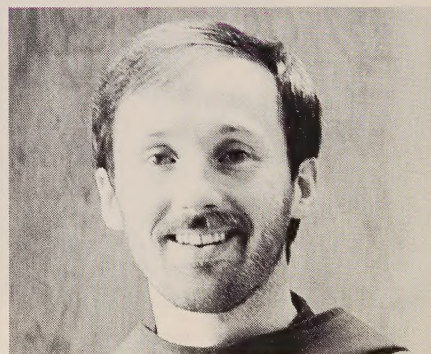
He wrote in his Journal after one bout of illness: *So I have almost come to the end of another journal. Three years have now passed since I began it. Much has*

happened. I took Life Vows, graduated in theology from Durham University; was deaconed and a year later priested in Edinburgh Cathedral. I suppose a lot has been completed in a relatively short period. I have achieved most of what I wanted.

In December 1992 Tim moved to London to St Katharine's. For those who lived with him at St Katharine's he was a kind, gentle and loving brother, committed to the service of all.

By June the lymphoma in his brain was growing. He collapsed, was taken into hospital, and told nothing could be done. This he accepted, trusting completely in God. He returned to St Katharine's where he was cared for by the brothers and sisters together with his friends, including John. During his illness he never complained and was always completely trusting and grateful to those who cared for him. At his funeral Brother Damian said: 'He was always courteous, even to waiting for Colin Wilfred to return before he died', and that summed up Tim. Courtesy was an outstanding mark of his life. He was anointed on the feast of the Birthday of Our Lady. Despite being virtually unconscious he joined in saying the Lord's Prayer. His great fear had been of dying alone, but he was surrounded by people: the brothers and sisters at St Katharine's, Brother Credan and friends and at 8.15am he died.

His funeral service, which he had planned



before he died, reflected his life. It contained the beautiful, the serious, the simple, the outrageous and the humorous. The packed chapel was a witness to the respect and love in which Tim was held by so many people.

Perhaps the last words can be his from his journal, about his approaching death: *Let this then be spoken of me when I have gone, that those eyes that gazed on the Cross, saw the glory of Jesus the Christ leading me on, and there in the distance, a mother smiling that another son has come home. And though I say now, 'I may go alone', I know there are many on that road, and maybe on that road, we'll love again.*

Thank you Tim for so much love, friendship and fun. Rest in Peace.

JUDE SSF

Death, faith and a doctor

by Richard Irons



Those who have not, sometimes say they would like to see a dead body. Doctors in training usually start with a dead body.

If you watch someone dying, there is usually little doubt when they have actually died. There may be a period when you are not quite sure: the last breath, is it the last breath? But there does seem to be a moment, maybe more than a moment, when there is a draining of life, when any residual hope for some further communication expires, and life has gone. The features are held, the warmth remains, but there is no life.

Doctors are privileged to be allowed to watch over birth and death. No wonder that people are curious if they have not actually seen either birth or death. Rightly curious.

Many recently qualified doctors work in casualty departments to gain experience. Sometimes you need to employ triage, a process of sorting the injured into those

are part of the natural world, the world of earthquakes, flood and storms, and the cycle of life and death of plant and animal alike.

A doctor is trained largely on a biological model. This is fine for trying to understand what is happening at a physical level, and to some extent at a psychological level. But it is inadequate training if it pays no attention to people's hopes and fears, and inadequate if there is no allowance for the doctor's hopes and fears. A doctor may acquire the understanding of a social anthropologist, but also needs to reflect on his or her own feelings. To survive sharing the experience of death and life-threatening illness, a doctor may take the view that life is arbitrary, and death an obliteration of life. This may be a commendable view, straight forward and brave, but with the danger of complacency. Held rigidly, it cuts off the



Francis lying dead, by Giotto, in the church of Santa Croce, Florence.

who are not in danger whose injuries are slight, those who are not in danger because it is too late, and those who need urgent and intense treatment. I was often struck by a sense of arbitrariness in this process as far as people's lives were concerned. One was taken, one was left, one hung in the balance. Life hanging on a thread, and not just in disaster; life always hanging on a thread. This produces a feeling both of gratitude for life and of profound scepticism that life is anything but quite arbitrary. It is very easy for doctors to be driven to the latter feeling. In the face of experience it is hard to hang on to the former. It is important to do both.

Death is an ending. Paradoxically this is a consolation. Life would be impossible without endings. Concern with spiritual life may make us ignore endings. Death is a reminder of our biological nature, that we

physician from the feelings of the dying person or the family, and from his or her own feelings. The physician needs not to be exempt from feelings of fragility.

The biological approach tends to pay not much attention to human bravery and determination in the face of impossible odds: it is only of interest as an extreme of human behaviour. Such insistence implies a containment of aspiration. Humans need hope. Hope cannot be contained.

A question implicit in a consultation is whether an illness will be life threatening. Maybe because of this some people are scared to go to a doctor. There is anxiety on the part of both doctor and patient in case the diagnosis is wrong. Most, but not all, say they want to know what is going to happen. A few people seem not to want to

articulate at all what is happening in the process of illness. This reluctance either has to do with profound anxiety, or perhaps a profound desire to maintain personal integrity. There might be the feeling that, if the illness is serious, it is perhaps best to be reticent about the deficiencies of one's body. After all the body will wear out or fail in the end whatever we do.

Some want to know if death is likely as a result of illness, and so knowing are helped to accept; others accept death in any case, maybe quite fatalistically, and are simply intent on maintaining a sense of their own self; others seek repentance and a handing over of life; others hope for heaven.

People's attitudes to death are like shifting sands, variable with mood, fortune or company. Even a strong faith does not always seem to help. Dying may dissolve faith. There are people mature in faith, who either are very frightened of dying or apparently feel quite unreasonably consumed with guilt. Equally people with no faith accept death with resignation and even resolution.

It is interesting how people acquire attitudes to death. Many people in adolescence or early adult life consider the question of dying. In the young who have not been traumatised, there is sometimes such a sense of life, that death is inconceivable. There exist vigorous young people who are surprised and indignant if they become ill. Others as part of their growing up become acutely aware not only of their mortality, but also of the possibility that they can bring about their own death. This is a healthy awareness of freedom to choose life or death.

To what extent may one opt for death, or at least limitation of life? Suicide, more than death from natural causes, is awe-inspiring because of human intention. People who make statements of intent with regard to their care in the face of life threatening or disabling illness seem to have a clear sightedness and perhaps bravery. But is it right deliberately to sever the connection between the thinking and feeling self and the body that maintains that possibility? There is too much at stake, not just for the individual but for the whole community.

Probably we all opt for a certain amount of death, or at least limitation: death in a metaphorical sense, the sort of death that keeps us in a well worn path, that is reluctant to accept change, that chooses preservation, rather than experiment. A doctor sees all sorts of people living limited lives, often because circumstances just do not allow anything else; but sometimes people seem unwilling to opt for life. Anxiety and guilt, useful checks, can severely limit vivacity and freedom.

To choose life we need hope. To hope we need love. To love we need to choose death as well as life.

The Reverend Richard Irons is a non-stipendiary priest and General Practitioner in Cambridge.



● Above: Little Portion Friary, New York, to which the brothers have recently returned.

AMERICAN PROVINCE

The first in an occasional series of reports from other provinces of C/SSF

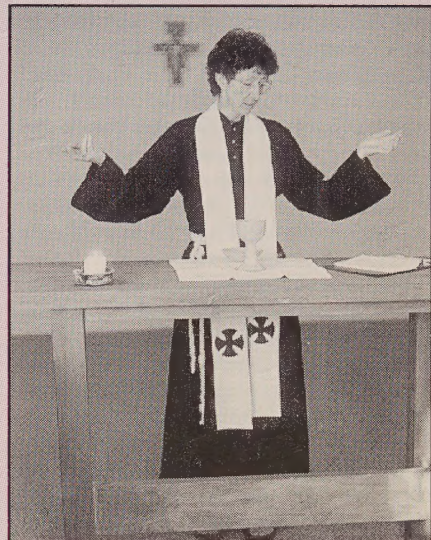


● Above: Anthony Balgrove and Jason Robert (left) in the kitchen with friends.



● Pamela Clare with friends at El Buen Samaritano, San Francisco, where she works.

There are brothers and sisters in San Francisco, and brothers in Brooklyn and at Little Portion Friary, New York. As in this province there are as many ministries as brothers and sisters, but they include working with prisoners, the homeless, people with AIDS and their families, those in hospital, and children. In addition they preach and lead retreats.



● Catherine Joy, Minister Provincial of CSF, in the American Province.



● Elizabeth Ann (right) on the occasion of her Life Profession, with Ruth (left) and Cecilia on the drums.



● The brothers blessing Justus Richard as he takes up office as Minister Provincial.

Separation, loss and healing

by Leonard Lunn



To care for the dying is to live with separation and loss at a deeply human level but it is also a challenge to address this pain from a healing perspective.

This is not to negate or deny the reality of separation and loss but to assert that caring for the dying is a healing ministry. That is my experience of what the Holy Spirit often seems to achieve, though describing exactly what kind of a healing ministry we have and how I justify the claim is far from easy.

If we can agree that healing, at least in a Christian context, essentially means wholeness rather than merely cure, then the Biblical concept of shalom seems helpful in understanding and defining our experience of hospice care.

This concept of shalom demonstrates that peace is much richer and fuller than the absence of aggravation or even suffering and challenges our common confusion between healing and cure. Healing - shalom - is much bigger.

It certainly may include cure but embraces the fundamental sense of wholeness, integrity and harmony that flows from a perception of meaning, even in the face of inexplicable suffering. If healing is our business then this enormously ambitious spiritual goal is at the heart of our ministry.

For most of us the greatest initial surprise in this work is to find that we are immersed in living rather than death and that the dying can have a greater capacity for life than the rest of us. It is almost as if those of us who work in this area have accidentally inherited a share in Jesus' promise - 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.'

There are many reasons why this should be true. There is a natural drive towards reconciliation and purposefulness in the face of impending death and the almost universal significance we give to this stage of life.

Here at St Christopher's Hospice there is a daily offering of prayer as well as a widely distributed prayer diary that undergirds our patients, their families and our staff. I also have the conviction that God is biased towards the sick, the suffering and the dying and that His presence is therefore more evident and felt in communities such as St Christopher's and other centres of healing. The record in the Gospels of Jesus' priority for the sick and the suffering supports this idea.

I was once called to anoint a patient and she died half an hour later. When I arrived back at the bedside her husband said, 'Thank you for anointing ... I think it gave her the strength to die'. That simple sentence illustrates how our ministry is a healing work. Far from our care being a passive, supporting role in a descent into weakness and then death, it was perceived as something much more positive - rather a

strengthening or equipping.

I believe that this articulates what our patients, families and staff often experience. The sacraments, the scriptures and every aspect of care are offered to our patients as they are in any other setting. The quality of that care, whether it comes from a doctor, social worker, nurse, chaplain or cleaner, is offered as part of God's love in our common humanity. We need to be confident in this ability to harness professional skills with our shared human predicament.

As well as offering the churches' God given methods of prayer and sacraments for healing, there is also a quiet solidarity. There is a creative waiting that Jesus asked of his three friends in Gethsemane that is at

be healed as much by what life throws at us as by death. Perhaps this is what is behind Jesus' question, 'Do you want to be healed?' Sometimes death may be more straightforward than life and even a rescue as much as healing.

Hope is a large part of healing the dying. For patients and their families this begins with the control of symptoms, the quality of the care and their key relationships. The proper provision for loved ones is most important in bringing them towards peace and wholeness.

Then the question, 'What comes after I die?' is often asked. Here we are being asked if the future beyond death gives meaning to this life and of course the resurrection of Jesus is our only real guarantee of ultimate wholeness.

Our Easter days at St Christopher's are so real because we have so many Good Fridays. Real hope is born in the furnace of suffering and pain, but a suffering that finds it is not alone. 'We have been born anew into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' (1 Peter 1:3) A living hope and only by Christ's resurrection.

But what of the staff in a place like St Christopher's? Whence our healing? Our wholeness also comes from the cross and it



A mother with her dying son.

the heart of the healing relationship, 'Watch with me'.

Not a request for action, or even less for answers or explanations, but the raw human need of a living presence that can share something of the powerlessness and loss of control that dying often means. Such a healing ministry is costly and requires of us a simplicity and a maturity that is rare.

The difficulty is that this quality of waiting is hard. We often need to be busy and active to justify ourselves to God and the sick, so there is less healing than there might be.

Paradoxically the greatest challenge to the healing of the dying often comes from a prolonged life after there has been some level of acceptance. It is the patient who says, 'Why is it taking so long, what is the point, I'm ready to go?' who seems to suffer most. This indicates that we need to

is most often our patients who minister life to us. Mother Frances Dominica, the Director of Helen House, the children's hospice in Oxford, says, 'I am being made whole by the dying and those who love them'. This is the testimony of many of us. If we are wise we know that we are also dying and we are being healed together.

This brief article is only a small indication of how we can begin to see caring for the dying as a healing ministry. Fundamentally it is an attitude, a 'Christlikeness' that meets people where they are in their brokenness and stays with them. Then when they are able, in their own way and in their own time, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we let them go to walk with the One who offers life more abundant.

The Reverend Leonard Lunn is Senior Chaplain at St Christopher's Hospice.

Patterns of death

by Brother Alan John

Seven people have died at Hilfield in the last fourteen months. Death has seemed to be prowling round like a roaring lion.

Usually the first image, the one that flashed instantly into my head when hearing the news, was quite simply a picture of the last visit, the last encounter. But these were swiftly replaced by the image of Death himself. I suppose that the obvious image is that of mediaeval church paintings of a figure with a skull for a face and a scythe in his hand. But for me personally the images which most immediately came to mind were from Ingmar Bergman's film *The Seventh Veil*, of Death playing chess on the seashore with the knight, or leading his subjects in a lonely dance silhouetted against the skyline. It is a resolutely male figure, with no place for inclusive language.

It was that image which dominated the funerals and which signified that Death the Great Leveller had, in some way, conferred a new status on his new subjects, made them all equal, demanded that they all received equal respect, equal attention.

Later on more disturbing pictures came. These were sometimes of moments of closeness, but sometimes they were of incidents when I had been irritated or made angry by the person who had died. These images insisted that Death had not made all equal. They forced me to acknowledge that one person meant more to me than another. They forced me to judgment: at first to a judgment on the other which was then reflected back to become judgment on myself. 'Judge not that ye be not judged.'

And yet at each visit Death insisted that just such a judgment was made; that it was essential for me to evaluate both the person and the relationship I had with them. What did I like about the person and why? What did I dislike and why? Underlying these questions, I began to realise, was the need to decide what I wished to incorporate from their life into mine, what lessons they had to teach. And that can call for harsh judgment.

Still further away from the actual deaths, I have come to see that there is a deeper, primary need, which demands even more imperiously that the living pass judgment on the dead: the need to create a pattern out of the apparent chaos. Each time someone died, all of us here would try to find a way of recognising that pattern - and a sort of group memory was created. Sometimes that group memory locked into my own like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle, but sometimes the two pieces just wouldn't go together. Then it became necessary either to modify one or both pieces, or to create a new piece which enabled the link to be made.

The pattern had somehow to fit the person. It was as though there was a search going on for a completion, a rounding off of the life as a whole. It had to be individual and yet it had, too, to form a part of some greater pattern, the Christian one. It was almost as if there was a need to make the life as satisfying as a novel or play, in which the hero is faced with problems, sometimes conquered, sometimes flunked, but always leading forward into a new situation, some new increase in knowledge, a new resolution: a sequence which had not come to an end but which, by Death's intervention, had merely taken another more dramatic step forward, albeit a final one in this world's terms.

Death was thus tamed, removed from the chaos of the jungle and forced, like a lion in a circus, to growl to life's tune. And yet does this not deny something of the true nature of the lion?

An atheist would say, I suppose, that all this pattern-making is an imposition, something that the mind creates to provide comfort in the face of total desolation. I won't know for sure until I have taken the leap myself - and if they are right, of course, I won't be left to know then. But I suppose that one of the things that keeps me a Christian is the sense that the eternal pattern does exist, is to be found, if only beyond the grave.

In a book of interviews with people about their reactions to death *The Ruffian on the Stair**, I was fascinated by these words of a psychiatrist: 'Jung... said that a year or more before death, when there may be no sign of any dying, people may already be changing And I've done some research with Rorschach tests - the ink-blot tests - with people who didn't know they were dying, and I found that they see very interesting images, sea journeys at night, things being reborn, plants dying and growing...' Such images of new growth and emerging patterns, it was sometimes possible to glimpse developing in those I was close to near the time of their death. It was a great privilege and the last gift they gave.

But that does not, of course, imply that there is any continuance beyond the grave, merely that the impulse to pattern is so deeply embedded that it is more in tune with the physical function of the body than we can be consciously aware of. Such observed facts, however intriguing, do not provide any certainty.

Christianity tries to hold the two aspects of death in tension. The cross holds the despair and the resurrection celebrates the positive, insisting that the pattern is there and will be perceived; and, if it is to be perceived, then survival is necessary. But the cross has to be met first. The celebration may be real, but so is the wildness of the lion.

**The Ruffian on the Stair* by Rosemary Dinnage, Penguin Books.

Theme prayer

O God,
who brought us to birth
and in whose arms we die:
in our grief and shock
contain and comfort us,
embrace us with your love,
give us hope in our confusion,
and grace to let go into new life;
through Jesus Christ.
Amen.



Mary Magdalene reaches out to the resurrected Christ, by Giotto.

Janet Morley

Sister Mary Francis CSF

Sister Mary Francis was born on November 10th 1896; her father was a policeman and she was baptised Maud Mary.

She discovered her vocation early and joined CSF in 1918, being life professed in 1920. At the time of joining, her legs were in calipers and she was not thought very strong; throughout her life she was subject to chest infections and struggled through pneumonia twice and removal of a tumour during her mid-70's.

However any physical weakness was balanced by considerable spiritual strength and great determination; as witness the remark of a younger sister who helped with her removal to Cornwall at the age of 80 - 'My goodness, that's a game old bird!'

She was the sister housekeeper at Dalston for twenty six years (beware, kitchen sisters!) and later nursed in the Old People's Home; and from either (morning!) job set out immediately after None at 2pm for parish visiting a mile away at St Peter's De Beauvoir Square, returning at 5pm.

When she was 60, and Community numbers thought sufficient, she and a Novice sister started work full time in St Mary of Eton parish - CSF's first branch house.

She loved the work and the parishioners loved her; and she outstayed two vicars and moved with her third, Fr Edwin Stark, when he was offered the living at All Saints'



Mary Francis (right) with Veronica.

Falmouth, and Eton resigned patronage of St Mary's to the Diocese.

The move to Falmouth was thought to be a semi-retirement for this indefatigable 80-year old, but she was to move three more times, to Mylor, to Blisland, and finally to true retirement at Polzeath.

The partnership of Fr Stark and Sr Mary Francis must be mentioned as a beautiful companionship of mutual care and friendship.

Sadly, Sister's sight failed and her last eighteen months were difficult ones, with poor hearing and increasing frailty. They were marked, as was her life, by patience and a strong sense of humour, ending in a nursing home, where she finally slipped away as gently and unobtrusively as the passing years. She died on 30th September 1993. May she rest in peace.

ELIZABETH CSF

Brother John Nicholas SSF

On the night of 26th September our brother John Nicholas took an overdose of antidepressants in his room at the Cambridge friary; he was found dead the next morning.

Chris Jones was the only child of a single parent, born in 1956 into a precarious life. He learnt early that if he was to survive he had to please other people. And so he became what he called a 'bright little button', hiding his own needs and feelings.

He first visited Hilfield when he was sixteen, when he began the struggle to reconcile himself to his vocation.

His entry into the community was delayed by one of the most significant events of his life: his mother's suicide, in 1985. He did not come to terms with this, and from then on was stalked by the fear that he too might be manic depressive. He took the name John Nicholas to fulfil a promise to her, and was professed on 23rd November 1991.

He was full of contradictions: extravagant yet Franciscan, a Christian yet able to incorporate a love of other faiths, researching a doctoral thesis yet able to counsel Hilfield's medium-term residents in Bernard House.

He could make anyone feel special, except himself. He carried many people's pain, but told so few of his friends about his own - until this summer, when depression overtook him.

John Nicholas concurred with our



doctor's advice to spend some months away from the community, on heavy medication, in the care of a friend.

I think we all believed that some real healing had occurred and that the way ahead was clear. But the 'bright little

button' had returned and was again concealing the truth.

On 6th October he was buried at Hilfield, the place he called home.

PETER SSF

Community Routes

◆◆ First Order Chapters

Br Amos writes:

"To be frank, I needed the FOC like I needed a hole in the head. I'm the sort of person who can get all the excitement he needs by taking the dog for a walk. Grand Canyon, Death Valley, Disneyland, Empire State Building - I did all that twenty five years ago. So it was reluctantly I went, taking with me some books for this term's studies, and some ear plugs.

I was surprised by New York. Manhattan, the U.N., the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, Harlem, Central Park, the top of the World Trade Centre, - I just ate it all up. I cricked my neck just like any tourist, I took my photos and sent my pack of post-cards, I walked with two dollars in my shoe in case it definitely beat walking the dog.

"But I was sceptical, guys, I really was. I mean, create unity between us by meetings, reports, agendas, bureaucracy, jet-lag and expense? Give over. And I was right. We did some useful stuff at those meetings but they weren't what counted. The real unity touched us at surprising moments, unplanned, mysterious, each time as unexpected as the last, like the soft wind that was bringing down the amazing autumn leaves that week.

"You no doubt know the old Swahili proverb which says, "To get to know someone you need to eat a kilo of salt together". Well we certainly enjoyed some marvellous American cooking, but that saying needs updating. What about the effects of endlessly reading and writing reports together, or of worship together, queuing for the bathroom in the morning, walking in the autumn woods and watching a horror movie on the video? That counts too as well as the salt. It all gave the uniting Spirit a chance to surprise us.

"Mind you we had our clashes. Developing provinces see things differently to shrinking provinces, and we wanted to save the richness of our diversity at the same time as finding our unity. That isn't easy. But in it all the wind of the Spirit was blowing and I felt I was blowing in the wind amongst the answer. We need each other in order to be healed by each other, the world is growing too small for misunderstandings, and too small for being apart. Of course many brothers and sisters will want to live and work in the country of their origins and not abroad but the very existence of a meeting like the FOC is a statement of intent that affects our life together. Simply put, it says, "Let's mix, let's not be separate." Do we want that? If not, let's save those plane fares, scrap the FOC, stop pretending, and leave me in peace to go walk the dog.



Giles, Clifton Henry, Daniel, Timothy Joseph and Brian, of the Pacific Islands Province, demonstrate custom dancing during the First Order Chapters.

◆◆ New Protector General SSF

The Rt Rev Philip Goodrich, Bishop of Worcester and Protector of the European Province, was elected by the First Order Chapters, after consultation with the Second and Third Orders, Protector General SSF, to succeed Rt Rev Kenneth Mason, formerly Protector of the Australia New Zealand Province. His election took effect from November 1st, 1993, for a period of six years.

◆◆ Let your light shine

August - hot sunny August - that's when it happened! Three Franciscans, five oldies (anyone over 30) and 50 young people (anyone between 14³/₄ and 29) descended on the Friary for the 10 days of the annual Hilfield Youth Camp, with tents for the brave and guest house beds for the not so brave.

Seven of the campers were the 'Content' team and they worked hard before and throughout the camp. They worked out the theme 'Let your light shine' and ran the evening sessions helping us to see how we could let our light shine. The other campers were in small groups who took it in turns to prepare and serve the meals, light the fire to heat up the water (this meant getting up at 7am), wash up, help the Friary, collect wood, clean, and keep the site tidy.

In the afternoons there were trips for cream teas and visits to the sea, and on site activities - this year music, art drama, and kite making. There was also a full day away from site - this year Bath was invaded!

After the evening sessions with the

'Content' team, night activities included quizzes, barn dancing, skittles and a campfire.

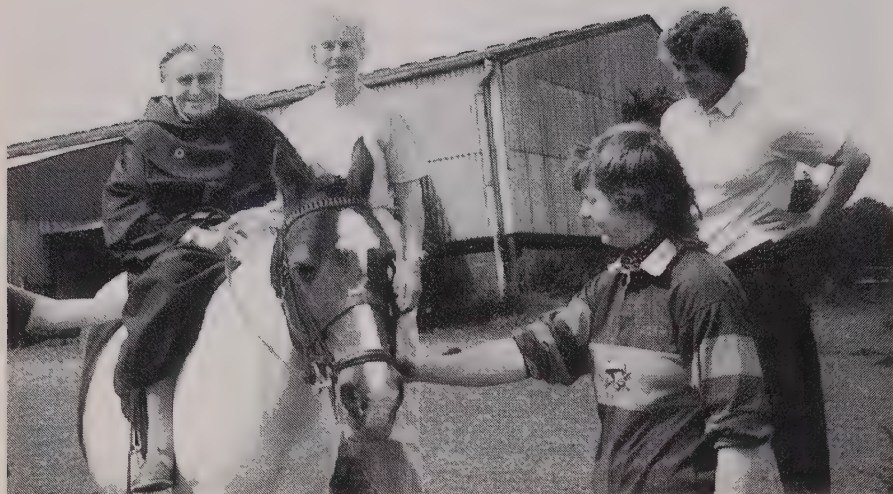
And to finish our time together, the final Sunday Eucharist was led by us to celebrate our time together and thank the brothers and all at the Friary for having us once again.

◆◆ Memories

On November 19th Fowler Wright Books published the memoirs of Br Michael SSF, 'For The Time Being'. He tells us that he was prompted to begin writing by Br Patrick nearly ten years ago! The intention was to write about Father Algy; and the story of Algy does dominate. It grew with his recollections of the events and personalities which have marked the growth of the Society since he became a novice



over fifty years ago. He also says a great deal about his own ministry, his many travels all over the world, his close connection with the Student Christian Movement, preaching, ecumenism, and his life as a Bishop in Cornwall and Cambridge. It is not, he says, quite an autobiography or a history - too much is left out - but a bundle of memories, recorded before it is too late!



◆◆ Platinum anniversary

Br David, 94, celebrated the seventieth anniversary of his ordination on 23rd September 1993. Brothers from Glasshampton and other friends joined him at the retirement home where he lives for a thanksgiving mass. He is rather camera-shy so there are no photographs of the occasion. However this gives us the opportunity to print another recent picture!

◆◆ Green habits

At a weekend meeting last June, a group of brothers and sisters compared notes on how to make our houses 'greener'. The discussion centred on the paradox that our poverty often leads us to buy cheaply, only for us to find that cheap production is usually at the expense of the disadvantaged and the environment. Similarly supermarket bargains are often only possible if animals are reared in unacceptable conditions.

The meeting acknowledged that many in our houses are already ecologically conscious but we urged that this awareness be more readily accepted as a valid component of our Franciscan vocation. To encourage this, a poster was designed to illustrate issues like recycling in our community households. We also produced a liturgy to integrate these concerns into our prayer life. For copies of both, write to Br Hugh at Hilfield enclosing a large SAE and a 25p stamp.

◆◆ The Bible today

The Annual Conference of the Communities Consultative Council was held at Swanwick in September. Sr Jacqueline, one of CSF's representatives, writes:

'46 members of 26 different Anglican communities were involved in discussing The authority and relevance of the Bible for living today, led by Dr John Court of the University of Kent.

'The areas covered were: pluralism, fundamentalism and authority; the relevance of the Bible; 'to each its own meaning'; ethical reading - and the ethics of reading; and symbols of power. Questions asked included: why should we read the bible; what do we say in 1993; do we read the bible actively and together, or inactively; does spiritual reading (allegory) have a future as well as a past.

'After our brains had worked overtime on all this, it was down to business, with Constitution, finance, vocations and literature being top of the list.

'Then a well deserved break, with a trip to the Community of the Holy Cross at Rempstone, video watching, or a chance for those on the fringe to catch up with one to one discussions.'

◆◆ East End Centenary

The 20th January is the centenary of the foundation of the Society of the Divine Compassion. James Adderley, Henry Chappel and Ernest Hardy took vows that day at Pusey House, Oxford, and later that day Adderley took charge of the mission church and district at St Philip's Plaistow. Hardy, more commonly known as Father Andrew, wrote in 1908 of the aim of their life as seeking '... to live a poor life, sharing the privation and discomfort of ordinary poor people'.

In the days when the community began work at Plaistow, unemployment, poverty, disease, dirt and drunkenness were rife. There was often real starvation. Father Andrew wrote to his mother, 'There is always an infinite pathos which only the infinite love of our Lord can make bearable.' The SDC grew rapidly in the

years before the First World War and was involved in political struggle as much as pastoral ministry; although Adderley had left to pursue his more diffuse vision of a third order Franciscan life. Their life was very hard and by the 1930s there were fewer vocations.

Today, the East End faces social problems as it did in the 1890s, and perhaps a more violent and increasingly insecure way of life. Although SDC as a community faded away by the end of the 1950s, SSF continues its work at 42 Balaam Street. This centenary therefore is both a celebration and a giving thanks for all God's blessings on this ministry through the years. The day itself is marked by a Eucharist at St Philip's Church, celebrated by the Bishop Protector. The preacher will be Daphne Jones, a member of the Third Order, who knew Father Andrew personally.

◆◆ Consider your call

How can I live out my vocation as a Christian more fully? What is God asking me to do? Why me? ...

Just some of the questions people bring to Consider Your Call. We don't aim to give any quick and easy answers but rather a chance to meet and share with other people who are asking the same sort of questions and, together, to reflect upon them and to explore what 'vocation' may mean in its widest possible terms through discussion, bible study, listening and prayer. A chance to step back from the hustle and bustle of every day and to be more open to God directing our lives in the beautiful natural surroundings at Hilfield or the more formal but hospitable house at Alnmouth.

1994 dates are July 21-25 at Hilfield and September 16-18 at Alnmouth. Contact Pat CSF at Compton Durville for more information.

◆◆ Life Profession



Brother Alan Michael is pictured here after his life profession on Saturday 8th May 1993 at St Serf's Episcopal Church in Glasgow. (Brother William Henry is on the left!) Alan Michael lives and works with Brother Benedict in the SSF house on the Barrowfield estate in Glasgow. It is an area which he knows well, having lived there for several years before joining the community.

◆◆ Goodbye

Br Noel Thomas returned to Australia on 4th November 1993 after 3 years studying at Regent's College, London. He now has an MA in the Psychology of Therapy and Counselling. His thesis was entitled 'Maturity and the Religious Life'.

During his time in London he sampled the life in various friaries. His course involved working as a psychotherapist under supervision at the Royal London Hospital as well as being associated with other training centres. Alongside his studies, he found time for parochial and pastoral work and took his turn as chaplain at Freeland. However, during this stay in Europe, he was perhaps most grateful for the opportunity to visit Paris, Assisi, and Jerusalem.

A party was held at St Katherine's Royal Foundation on 31st October to say goodbye. His immediate destination was the Stroud

Friary, NSW, where he will stay until his future plans for work in Australia are finalised.

◆◆ Old Boys

July the 10th 1993 saw a well attended first reunion of 'Old Boys', former staff and friends of St Francis School, Hooke - the first since its closure in June 1992. It included people who had been there in 1946 when the school opened: Antony Lewis, and Babs and Wilfred Draper.

Organised to coincide with the brothers' Summer Festival at Hilfield, there was a full programme of events. This included videos of past days and events at the school, and ended with tea and a short act of worship held in the courtyard. The main inspiration and driving force behind the reunion were Old Boy Jeff Later and his wife Yvonne, and Howard Pankhurst, formerly on the

staff. They have also produced two newsletters and are planning a London-based reunion for next January and another get-together next July at Hilfield. These events provide a chance for catching up, lots of laughter, and even a few tears!

◆◆ Round-up

Gregory has been elected the new Guardian of Alnmouth, and it is hoped that there will be a group of nine resident brothers by Easter 1994 ... **Gordon** has moved from Scunthorpe to Alnmouth ... **Damian** and **Angelo** have moved to Scunthorpe ... **Hubert** has moved to Hilfield ... **Jacqueline Anne** moved from Plaistow to St Elizabeth's House Birmingham in November.

Susan Nash and **Christine Woodburn** were admitted as postulants at Compton Durville on September 17th ... six new postulants are now resident at Hilfield ... **Jean Te Puna** made her first profession in Auckland on November 29th ... **Giles David** has now been released from first vows ... **Cornelius James** and **Terry** have both withdrawn from the noviciate.

Recent visitors from other provinces include **Christopher John** from Australia/NZ, and **Clifton Henry** and **Timothy Joseph** from the Pacific Islands.



During the First Order Chapter's visit to the United Nations, Ministers General Brian and Cecilia met Father Herman Schaluck, Minister General of OFM.

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Reviews

*Malcolm Goldsmith and Martin Wharton, **Knowing me - knowing God:** exploring personality type and temperament, SPCK, £9.99*

This is one of those books that we have been waiting for, a good comprehensive guide to the Myers Briggs Type Indicator that is written in English and not in Americanese. The authors have clearly written from years of experience with many people and are able to speak authoritatively both about the Indicator itself and the ways that it can help people to know themselves better and to relate in different situations.

There is an excellent introduction to the theory and then good profiles of the sixteen types which have some refreshing insights. Then there are good sections about different sorts of relating, living together, working together and learning together. They have not been afraid to incorporate some of the temperament theory that some purists would fight shy of.

The part of the book that particularly interests us is the section on the church and spirituality and type. This is good and from a slightly different perspective than the one we are used to, and again written from a wealth of experience.

My only criticism of the book would be that it suffers from being written by two extroverts and the usual lack of understanding of the complexity of introverts emerges. In the end this is okay because the introverts can read between the lines though I do look forward to the day when an authoritative book on this aspect of type emerges.

This being said, it is the book that I shall be recommending people to read if they want to capitalise on their initial learning about type.

PETER SSF

*Brenda and Stuart Blanch (compilers), **Heaven a Dance:** an Evelyn Underhill anthology, Triangle, 1992, £4.99*

The revival and reprinting of Evelyn Underhill's writings, triggered by the 50th anniversary of her death in 1941, is timely. She began serious writing about Christian life and prayer around 1910, while her own journeying was very much a quest. Fairly advantaged in early life, she had much to interest her and went annually for European holidays absorbing varying aesthetic and religious influences but feeling quite dissatisfied beneath the surface highlights.

In these days of renewed interest in spirituality, the writings of one who was a mystic in the best sense, though very much down to earth, are of practical help. Here we have a comprehensive selection, drawn from her own search for meaning and reality in life. As the introduction tells us, 'she left behind for posterity an example of faith which was not the product of some devastating spiritual experience, but the end of a long slow journey from a vague theism

to personal trust in Christ.'

Heaven a Dance brings us miniatures of her worth as a spiritual guide, in themes such as the discernment of God's will, or the clash between evil and the holiness of God. Evelyn Underhill wrote from experience with real people, one of her favourite reminders being that 'the mystic is called to a life more active, because more contemplative, than that of others.' 'A limited view, endless small duties and deprivations, and no certainty as to whether we are winning or not: these are the conditions of the long struggle for the victory of disinterested love.'

Now, as much as when she wrote, her words speak to our human state. We are indebted to Brenda and Stuart Blanch for their labours in this compilation.

ELIZABETH CSF

*Angela Ashwin **Patterns not Padlocks - for parents and all busy people.** Eagle Publications, 1992*

In the introduction to her new book, Angela Ashwin speaks of a friend who has helped her in times of spiritual need, by offering her three important things: understanding, interpretation of experience in relation to faith, and practical ideas and initiatives. On reading Angela Ashwin's book I felt that I had found just such a friend.

Perhaps more than anything else, what Ashwin offers through this new work is a genuine understanding of the situation that parents find themselves in, in relation to their spiritual needs.

The humour that pervades the book and which is enhanced by Paul Judson's cartoons, allows the reader to relax and engage deeply with the issues that are being discussed, and the interpretation of everyday experiences in relation to faith, I thought were excellent and illuminating.

As well as offering understanding, this book is also filled with encouragement. Ashwin begins by stating that 'regular quiet times fly out of the window once babies arrive on the scene' and instead of exhorting the reader to try harder to recapture them, offers a whole host of creative ideas which help the reader to pray within their changed set of circumstances.

People are only too keen to tell you that 'life will never be the same once the baby arrives'. What they don't tell you is that your spiritual prayer life will never be the same again either! If my experience is anything to go by it needed a complete overhaul, and I shall always be indebted to Angela Ashwin's book for helping me to create a fresh and realistic structure for the months and years ahead.

I feel confident in saying that any parent, and particularly a new parent like myself, will find this book invaluable.

CAROLINE DICK

*Jeanne Hinton, **Communities: Stories of Christian Communities in Europe,** Eagle, £8.99*

Community is in danger of becoming a tired word in our Christian vocabulary. But the fact that so many people use it is a sign of

how deep a reaction there is to the dominant individualism of contemporary Western culture. Whatever benefits that culture has brought, there is a human desire to share and co-operate which it fails to nourish.

In this well-illustrated book the author describes visits to twelve communities, in Britain and on the continent, which have emerged from different denominations and spiritualities.

Most are not traditional religious communities. **Franciscan** readers, however will be interested in the portrait of the Stepney house in 1988, with Brother Victor in full colour on page 67!

The text is conversational in style, affectionate in tone, combining an historical sketch with observations on current life. Any evaluation or judgment is left to the reader.

There is little on the problems of living as community, with only Sr Vreni of Grandchamp's comments touching on it. She refers to the need for 'adequate time for inner healing' before a sister can enter fully into that order. Community is not about side-stepping issues in a cosy 'togetherness' but in facing 'buried hurts' (Vreni's phrase) in a shared context. I enjoyed the book - but there is so much more to be said!

PETA DUNSTAN

*Marco Bartoli, **Clare of Assisi, DLT,** £14.95*

The English and French translations of this book were eagerly awaited, particularly for this 800th anniversary of Clare's birth. This sympathetic study by a professional historian has come up to expectations. The translation does it justice.

Clare's originality stands out clearly: her gospel-based understanding of poverty and the 'privilege of living without privileges'; the fresh and positive approach to manual work, which she and Francis saw as valuable in itself and as a distinguishing mark of minoritas or 'lesserness'; the novel pattern of working at spinning, weaving, etc in order to have something to give away, and then relying on gifts in return; the lack of class distinctions between the sisters, and the name of sisters (Benedictine nuns might address each other as sister, but they were described as nuns and addressed by others as Dame); a form of enclosure that was open to the concerns of the whole world; a strength of character which could seek new ways and stand up to the Pope (old enough to be her grandfather); and above all the freedom of spirit which can be seen in the way she adapts to her own purposes the Rules written by two saints (Francis and Benedict) and by two Popes.

There is not much here about the forms of community life at St Damian's and the greater democracy there, but Clare's confidence in her sisters, expressed in her Rule, shines out. One of the most valuable things here is the perception that Clare came to joy 'through much material difficulty and spiritual discomfort'. It makes her more approachable.

There is much more here. Bartoli was asked recently if there was enough to say

about Clare for a session of five days. His reply: 'Five days? Six months!' shows that the atmosphere of freedom of spirit which she and her story can still communicate may become addictive.

GILLIAN CLARE CSCI

Nancy Roth, The Breath of God: an approach to prayer, Cowley Publications, £6.99.

'Just as breath constantly renews the body, filling the lungs with oxygen and emptying the lungs of carbon dioxide, so also our prayer constantly opens us to God's life within us and helps us empty ourselves of those things which are alien to fullness of life.'

Nancy Roth, trained as dancer, musician and priest, uses the image of the breath to teach a spirituality which unites body and spirit, prayer and life, interweaving them together in a way which honours the incarnational heart of our faith.

She begins by suggesting ways of learning to breathe and relax more deeply - not only as preparation for prayer but as prayer, as we become aware of God's breath in us. Then four chapters cover contemplative, reflective, and verbal prayer, and prayer as action.

In each one she suggests a wide range of stimuli and foci for prayer, and constantly relates prayer and life. So praying with the breath becomes not only a means of formal prayer but of coming alive to moments of grace minute by minute.

Full of ideas and gentle encouragement for those who seek to pray or to help others to pray, it does not ignore the difficulties and discouragements, but left me with a sense of the naturalness of prayer which 'is not a duty; rather, like inhalation, it is our life'.

HELEN JULIAN CSF

For Epiphany

Christmas is lamplight and candlelight,
starglow gently entering the darkness
so that it is no longer alien.

It is morning's firstlight,
peace in the heart of the flame,
where the simplest colours gleam
and earth is warmed
by the fulfilment of an eternal need.



If we could stand
on the rim of the world
we should see Epiphany-light
wash across the sky to the hills
like the sea breaking against cliffs;
but it is a translucent day-light
too firm to crumble into foam.
Its waves swirl and uncurl
flowing over the whole world.
It is a strong fire that comes
from the striking of flint and steel.



And it has its own music,
fluting along the valleys, silver in
air,
a bridge for our contemplation.
When such fire touches water
there shall be wine for the asking.
So we shall celebrate Epiphany
with a miracle to transform the feast.

Michaela CSCI

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Flame of Faith

by Ann Potts

*Tertiaries increasingly take part in parish missions led by brothers and sisters.
We asked tertiary Ann Potts to share the experience of her first mission.*

When I was asked what it was like to be on my first mission, the thing that sprang to mind was that it was rather like having a baby! I suppose that as I have been a mother it is not such a strange image for me to use, but perhaps I should explain it in the context of the Mission of St Margaret's Church in North Oxford.

The first thing was the getting ready, the preparation of little things that might come in useful, and the anticipation. Then when I arrived at this strange place where I didn't know anybody I started asking 'Why on earth did I let myself in for this?' As I knelt for the commissioning by Bishop Peter Walker I had to make a positive silent affirmation, 'Well yes, I'm here now, and I'll go for it'. I suppose too there was the sheer hard work involved, and most important of all the fulfilment in it and the strange mixture of happy surprise and a sort of recognition. Like having a baby!

Praying for the spirit

The parish prayed to the Father that 'your kingdom may go forward and your glory be made known to all', and they prayed for the presence of the Holy Spirit 'with the flame of faith to strengthen us, the light of truth to guide us and the fire of love to unite us'. 'Flame of Faith' was chosen as the title of their Mission and the symbol of the flames appeared throughout the parish on banners, vestments, balloons, posters and programmes.

The Franciscan team supporting the Mission consisted of Sister Pat, Sister Freda, and Jason, (now Brother Jason Anthony but then a postulant with SSF), with me representing the Third Order. We were all very sad that Brother James who was to have led the Mission was unable to be with us, but Pat had also visited the parish and was very well equipped to take over as leader.

When we arrived we met Reverend Peter Wilcox who was Convenor of the Mission Steering Group, the vicar, the Reverend John Morrison Wells, and the other team members. As we attempted to come alongside the parish in what the Mission was all about, it was very apparent how much planning, prayer and hard work had gone into its preparation.

Building up links

St Margaret's is a bright, lively, gifted parish which already had good links with the community. A lot of the work they did in their mission was about building up these links, and exploring both how they could connect with the concerns of the community, and how that related to the life of the church.

The events of the week included a meeting with teachers, parents and the MP at the local school, a dinner in the Institute, a musical evening, an 'Any Questions'



The mission team, Freda, Pat, Jason Anthony and Ann Potts, with the mission symbol.

panel, a banner-making workshop and a procession round the parish. There were also home groups, services in old people's homes, coffee mornings and teas with the team each day for the youngsters. The offices and daily eucharists were interspersed with worship in Taizé style, 'Songs of Praise', and a healing service, and these services were often accompanied by their gifted choir.

As a team we preached and sang, walked and talked and prayed and ate. We spoke and listened, laughed and agonised and then talked and prayed and ate again! When we were making banners with the children on the first Saturday morning one of the youngsters asked if I was Jason's mother. This seemed to break the ice and I promptly laid claim to this honorary status.

The week was spiced with laughter. One person has since written saying that she eventually decided that Franciscans were OK when Freda joined in and danced the Charleston at the Parish Party and the team entertained them with a silly song! (There seems to be some folk memory too about a joke involving the vicar and St Peter which was told at the Dinner, but I am not proposing to pursue that particular line.)

Suddenly a week had gone. It struck me as symbolic that when I preached on the first Sunday morning I seemed to be miles away from the congregation which was full of unknown distant faces. A week later the

lectern had been physically moved forward and I was close to the friendly faces of the people I had come to know in that little piece of time. There was a great celebratory Eucharist on the Sunday morning with Pat preaching and the vicar celebrating, and then it was time to go home.

Surge of energy

'Flame of Faith' has, I think, produced in the parish a great surge of creative energy. It was quite a wrench to come away and to leave wondering how they will focus that energy and what they will do with this new thing.

Although I had been warned about the feeling of loss after a mission, I was still surprised that I had become so deeply engrossed in the parish in that eight days that I really missed it when I came away. I missed the team too - Jason's friendly warmth, Freda with her laughter and her music, and Pat's thoughtful perception. Going back to work on Monday morning was quite a shock to the system as I tried to re-adjust to a different world.

I telephoned the vicar some weeks later and knowing how tired people were after the Mission, I asked, 'Have you got over it yet?' 'Oh no,' he replied, 'we are never going to get over it. We are only just beginning'